

QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store
Chester vicinity, Queen Anne's County

Constructed ca. 1889

Privately owned

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The James E. Kirwan House and Store is located on the east side of Dominion road south of the village of Chester on Kent Island, Queen Anne's County. The complex stands on 300 acres of agricultural preserve and is defined by a picket fence on the west, a road trace leading to Kirwan Creek on the north, a grassy field on the east, and a hedge on the south. The centerpiece of the complex is a ca. 1889 2 ½-story, 5-bay, wood-frame I-house with an attached 2 ½-story, 3-bay, wood-frame, front-gable store. A ca. 1889 wood-frame dairy stands immediately east of the house. Also present are a wood-frame pump house, two wood-frame sheds, a concrete fountain, and concrete garden pavers and wall remnants, all dating to the 1940s. The complex is currently owned by the Kent Island Heritage Society and is in good condition. The Franklin W. Coleman House (QA-551), constructed in 1910 for Kirwan's daughter and son-in-law, stands on the west side of Dominion Road directly opposite the Kirwan House and Store.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

James E. Kirwan (1848-1938), noted Kent Island businessman and politician, constructed the Kirwan House and Store ca. 1889 adjacent to a landing on Kirwan Creek and halfway between the village of Chester and the fishing community of Dominion. Kirwan ultimately operated the store and five farms totaling over 300 acres as well as a lumber mill, cooper's mill, blacksmith shop, coal business, and insurance business. Kirwan was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Centreville National Bank and served in the Maryland Senate from 1900 to 1908. In 1917, Kirwan led the effort to prevent Kent Island from being converted to a military proving ground. Upon his death in 1938, he was known as the "Grand Old Man of Kent Island." Kirwan's son Lemuel operated the store until his death in 1955.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. QA-550

1. Name of Property

(indicate preferred name)

historic James E. Kirwan House and Store

other

2. Location

street and number 641 Dominion Road not for publication

city, town Chester ☒ vicinity

county Queen Anne's

3. Owner of Property

(give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Kent Island Heritage Society, Inc.

street and number P.O. Box 321 telephone (410) 643-5969

city, town Stevensville state MD zip code 21666

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Queen Anne's County Circuit Court liber SM 584 folio 164

city, town Centreville tax map 57 tax parcel 61 tax ID number 04-112970, 04-035542

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
☐ Other:

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	4
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> defense	0
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	1
		<input type="checkbox"/> education	2
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	7
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> social	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	0
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:	0
			Total
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
			0

7. Description

Inventory No. QA-550

Condition

☐ excellent ☐ deteriorated
☒ good ☐ ruins
☐ fair ☐ altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The James E. Kirwan House and Store is located on the east side of Dominion road south of the village of Chester on Kent Island, Queen Anne's County. The complex stands on 300 acres of agricultural preserve and is defined by a picket fence on the west, a road trace leading to Kirwan Creek on the north, a grassy field on the east, and a hedge on the south. The centerpiece of the complex is a ca. 1889 2 1/2-story, 5-bay, wood-frame I-house with an attached 2 1/2-story, 3-bay, wood-frame, front-gable store. A ca. 1889 wood-frame dairy stands immediately east of the house. Also present are a wood-frame pump house, two wood-frame sheds, a concrete fountain, and concrete garden pavers and wall remnants, all dating to the 1940s. The complex is currently owned by the Kent Island Heritage Society and is in good condition. The Franklin W. Coleman House (QA-551), constructed in 1910 for Kirwan's daughter and son-in-law, stands on the west side of Dominion Road directly opposite the Kirwan House and Store.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The James E. Kirwan House and Store is located on the east side of Dominion Road south of the village of Chester on Kent Island, Queen Anne's County. The house faces west and stands on 300 acres of agricultural preserve. The area immediately surrounding the house is defined by a picket fence on the west, a road trace leading to Kirwan Creek on the north, a grassy field on the east, and a hedge on the south. Several large, deciduous trees surround the complex. Otherwise, the land is flat and open with trees bordering Kirwan Creek about 1000 feet to the east. The complex consists of a ca. 1889 I-house with an attached store, a ca. 1889 dairy, a ca. 1940s pump house, and two ca. 1940s sheds. All but one shed are in good condition. A ca. 1940s concrete fountain is located immediately east of the residence, and various concrete border remnants and pavers can be found throughout the lawn.

The James E. Kirwan House and Store consists of a 2 1/2-story, 5-bay I-house with an attached 2 1/2-story, 3-bay, front-gable store. The store is attached to the north elevation of the house and projects to the west. The building has brick veneer over the foundation, asbestos siding, and an asphalt-shingle roof with a boxed cornice.

The I-house has central gables with round-arch windows on the east and west elevations and brick interior end chimneys. Main entry is in the center bay of the west elevation and consists of a 4-panel door with 3-light sidelights and a 4-light transom of colored glass. There is a secondary entry on the east elevation. Although a few windows have been replaced, most of the original 2/2 wood sash remain. The windows have louvered shutters. There are 1-story porches on the west and east elevations of the house. The west (front) porch has brick veneer over the foundation, a jigsaw balustrade, chamfered posts with jigsaw brackets, and a hipped roof with a central gable. The east (rear) porch has chamfered posts with jigsaw brackets and a shed roof. A second story bathroom addition has been constructed over the north half of the east porch. On the interior, the house has parlors flanking the center passage and a dining room in the ell behind the north parlor. The first floor finishes consist of pine floors, simple baseboards, plaster walls and ceilings with medallions in the parlors, crown molding, and beaded door and window surrounds. The fireplaces in the parlors have carved wood mantels. There is a small fireplace with a plain wood mantel on the east wall of the dining room; its chimney has been removed. The stair is double run with jigsaw step brackets and a turned newel and balusters. The second floor has pine floors, plain baseboards, unornamented plaster walls and ceilings, and carved wood fireplace mantels.

The store has its main entry in the center bay of its west elevation. The entry consists of half-glass double doors beneath a 3-light transom. The 2/2 windows flanking the entry have paneled shutters. The 1-story porch on the west elevation has concrete steps leading to the doors and a full-width standing-seam metal shed roof supported by brackets. A 1-story porch on east elevation of the store has been enclosed with asbestos siding, aluminum windows, and a shed roof. The interior of the store has a pine floor and beadboard walls and ceiling. The north and south walls have built-in shelves with beaded edges. Shelving in the southeast corner of the store is recent; other shelving is original.¹ The counter on the north side of the store is original and is faced with beadboard. The glass cases on the south side of the store came from the Martin Jones Store (QA-549).² The stove in the east end of the store is not

¹ According to Nancy Cooke, members of Kent Island Heritage Society constructed the new shelving.

² The counter from the Martin Jones Store was installed by the Kent Island Heritage Society.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store
Continuation Sheet

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original.³ A paneled door in the northeast corner of the store leads a narrow stair accessing storage rooms on the second floor. A small closet occupies the southeast corner of the store. Behind the store is a kitchen with ca. 1930s finishes.

Four outbuildings survive on the property: a ca. 1880 dairy, a ca. 1940s pump house, and two ca. 1940s sheds. The dairy stands immediately east of the residence and has a brick foundation, asbestos siding, and a wood shake gable roof with scalloped bargeboards and fascia boards. The dairy has a batten door on the north elevation and louvered window openings on the other three elevations. A ca. 1920s pavilion with a hipped shake roof was constructed over the dairy. The ca. 1940s pump house stands immediately east of the dairy and has a parged brick foundation, board-and-batten siding, and a standing-seam metal shed roof. There is a batten door on the south elevation. The ca. 1940s shed 1 stands about 50 feet east of the pump house and has a poured concrete foundation, vertical and horizontal board walls covered in asbestos siding, and an asphalt-shingle shed roof. There are aluminum windows on the south elevation. Entry was on the east elevation, but that wall has fallen in. Shed 1 is in poor condition. The ca. 1940s shed 2 stands about 80 feet north of shed 1 and has a concrete-block pier foundation, board-and-batten siding, and an asphalt-shingle gable roof with open eaves. Shed 2 has a batten door on the west elevation and 6/6 wood sash on the south and east elevations.

³ The stove was installed by the Kent Island Heritage Society.

8. Significance

Inventory No. QA-550

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/	<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____	

Specific dates ca. 1889 construction

Architect/Builder

unknown

1938 (death of James E. Kirwan), 1997 (bequeathed to Kent Island Heritage Society)

Construction dates ca. 1889

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register☐ Maryland Register☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

James E. Kirwan (1848-1938), noted Kent Island businessman and politician, constructed the Kirwan House and Store ca. 1889 adjacent to a landing on Kirwan Creek and halfway between the village of Chester and the fishing community of Dominion. Kirwan ultimately operated the store and five farms totaling over 300 acres as well as a lumber mill, cooper's mill, blacksmith shop, coal business, and insurance business. Kirwan was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Centreville National Bank and served in the Maryland Senate from 1900 to 1908. In 1917, Kirwan led the effort to prevent Kent Island from being converted to a military proving ground. Upon his death in 1938, he was known as the "Grand Old Man of Kent Island." Kirwan's son Lemuel operated the store until his death in 1955.

RESOURCE HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

James E. Kirwan (1848-1938) was born in Baltimore and served in the Maryland oyster navy, which patrolled the Chesapeake Bay to prevent illegal oyster dredging. Kirwan married Mary Rebecca Gardner in 1867 and settled in Queen Anne's County. The couple had three children: Charles (born 1868), Sophia Lavinia (born 1870) and Lemuel (born 1872). Kirwan appears on Lake, Griffing, & Stevenson's 1877 Map of Queen Anne's County as the owner of a residence and store on the west side of what is now Dominion Road. Kirwan's advertisement reads: "Dealer in Dry Goods, Notions, Groceries, Hats, Caps, Boots, Shoes, and in fact everything usually kept in a first-class Country Store." Although advertised as a Stevensville business, Kirwan's store was strategically located between the village of Chester (then Sharktown) and the fishing community of Dominion.

Local tradition holds that in 1889, Johnstown floodwaters washed "vast quantities" of lumber into the Chesapeake Bay and onto the shores of Kent Island. Kirwan is said to have bought the lumber to construct the current store on the east side of Dominion Road.⁴

Kirwan was a major landholder, businessman, and politician on Kent Island. He ultimately operated five farms totaling over 300 acres as well as a landing on Kirwan Creek (1000 feet east of the Kirwan House and Store) where he received shipments of lumber and coal for sale to other local businesses. At its height, the complex surrounding the Kirwan House and Store included a lumber mill, cooper's mill, and blacksmith shop as well as domestic outbuildings.⁵ In 1910, Kirwan added the Franklin W. Coleman House (QA-551) on the west side of Dominion Road, constructed for Kirwan's daughter and son-in-law. The Kirwan family complex came to resemble a small village.

⁴ Biography of James E. Kirwan compiled by Nancy Cooke, Kent Island Heritage Society.

⁵ Ibid.

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Continuation Sheet

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Kirwan also operated an insurance business and served on the Board of Directors of the Centreville National Bank. As a politician, he served in the Maryland State Senate from 1900 to 1908. In 1917, Kirwan led a 600-person delegation to Washington, D.C. to protest the establishment of a military proving ground on Kent Island. The proving ground was ultimately built at Aberdeen.⁶

When James E. Kirwan died in 1938, he was known as the "Grand Old Man of Kent Island." The Kirwan House and Store passed to his youngest son, Lemuel Kirwan. Lemuel Kirwan is remembered as an avid gardener. Bertha Coleman Abbott, who grew up in the Franklin W. Coleman House (QA-551) across the street, remembers that Lemuel's wife Maude ran the store while Lemuel worked in his gardens.⁷ The later outbuildings and various remnants of concrete concrete pavers and borders therefore probably date to Lemuel Kirwan's tenure from 1938 to 1955.

After Lemuel Kirwan died in 1955, the Kirwan Store closed, and the property passed to his daughter, Mary Catherine Kirwan. Mary Catherine Kirwan bequeathed the property to the Kent Island Heritage Society with the stipulation that it be opened as a museum. The Kent Island Heritage Society is in the process of converting the property to a museum.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Conversation among Julie Darsie, Bertha Coleman Abbott, Dorothy Abbott Wagner, and Carl Wagner, May 20, 2005.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. QA-550

Conversation among Julie Darsie, Bertha Coleman Abbott, Dorothy Abbott Wagner, and Carl Wagner, May 20, 2005.

Cooke, Nancy. History of James E. Kirwan. Pamphlet published by Kent Island Historical Society.

Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson. *An Illustrated Atlas of Kent and Queen Anne Counties, Maryland*. Philadelphia: Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson, 1877.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property approximately 1 acre

Acreage of historical setting approximately 300 acres

Quadrangle name Kent Island

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The James E. Kirwan House and Store occupies part of Parcel 61 on Queen Anne's County Tax Map 57. The area occupied by the complex constitutes approximately 1 acre and is bounded on the north by the road trace leading to Kirwan Creek, on the east by the edge of a field, on the south by the hedge, and on the west by the picket fence. Although nearly 300 acres are still tied to the Kirwan House and Store, only the small area around the complex of buildings was surveyed.

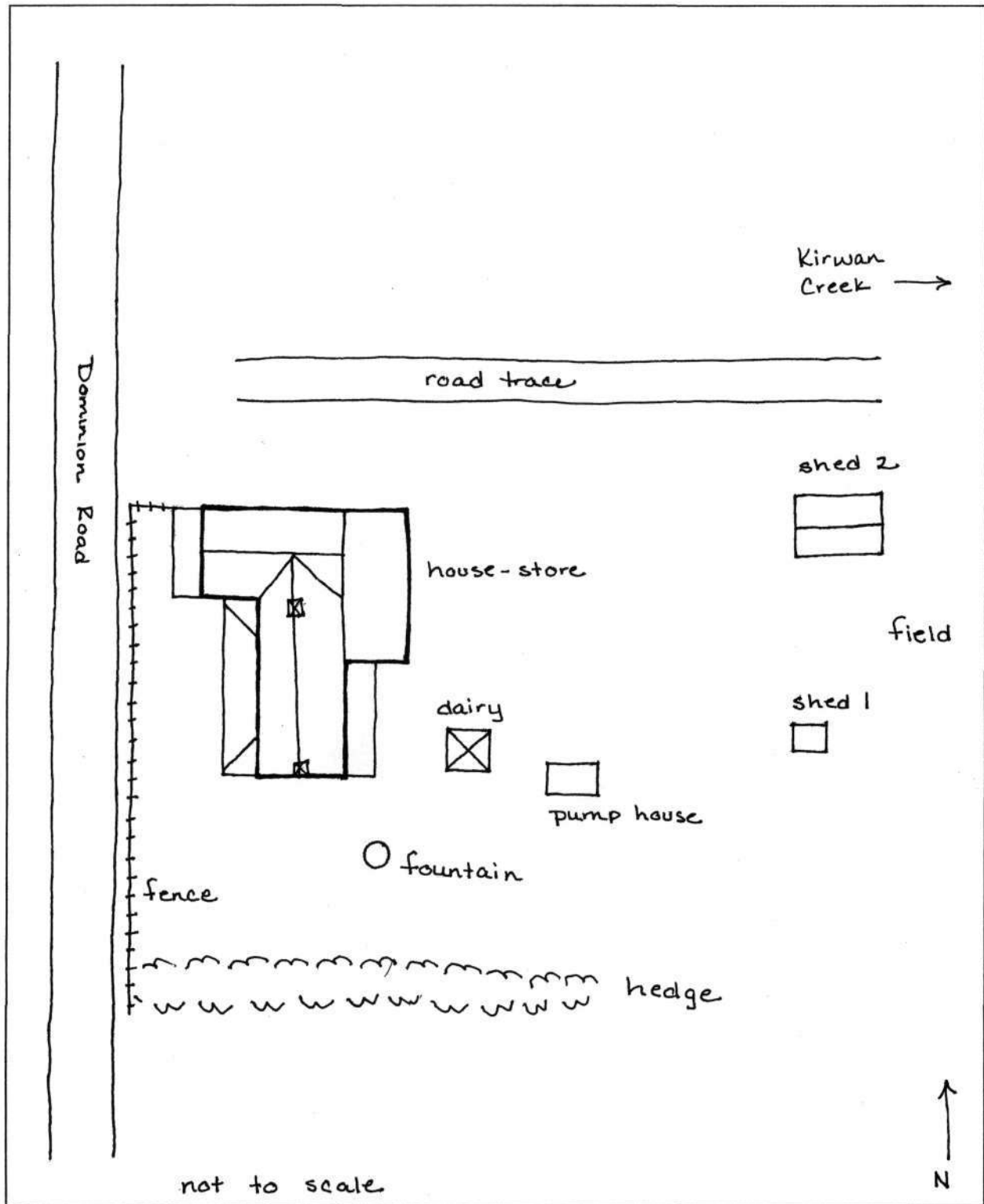
11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Julie Darsie (history by Nancy Cooke, Kent Island Heritage Society)		
organization	Betty Bird & Associates, LLC	date	June 2005
street & number	2607 24 th St., NW, Suite 3	telephone	(202) 588-9033
city or town	Washington, D.C.	state	N/A

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

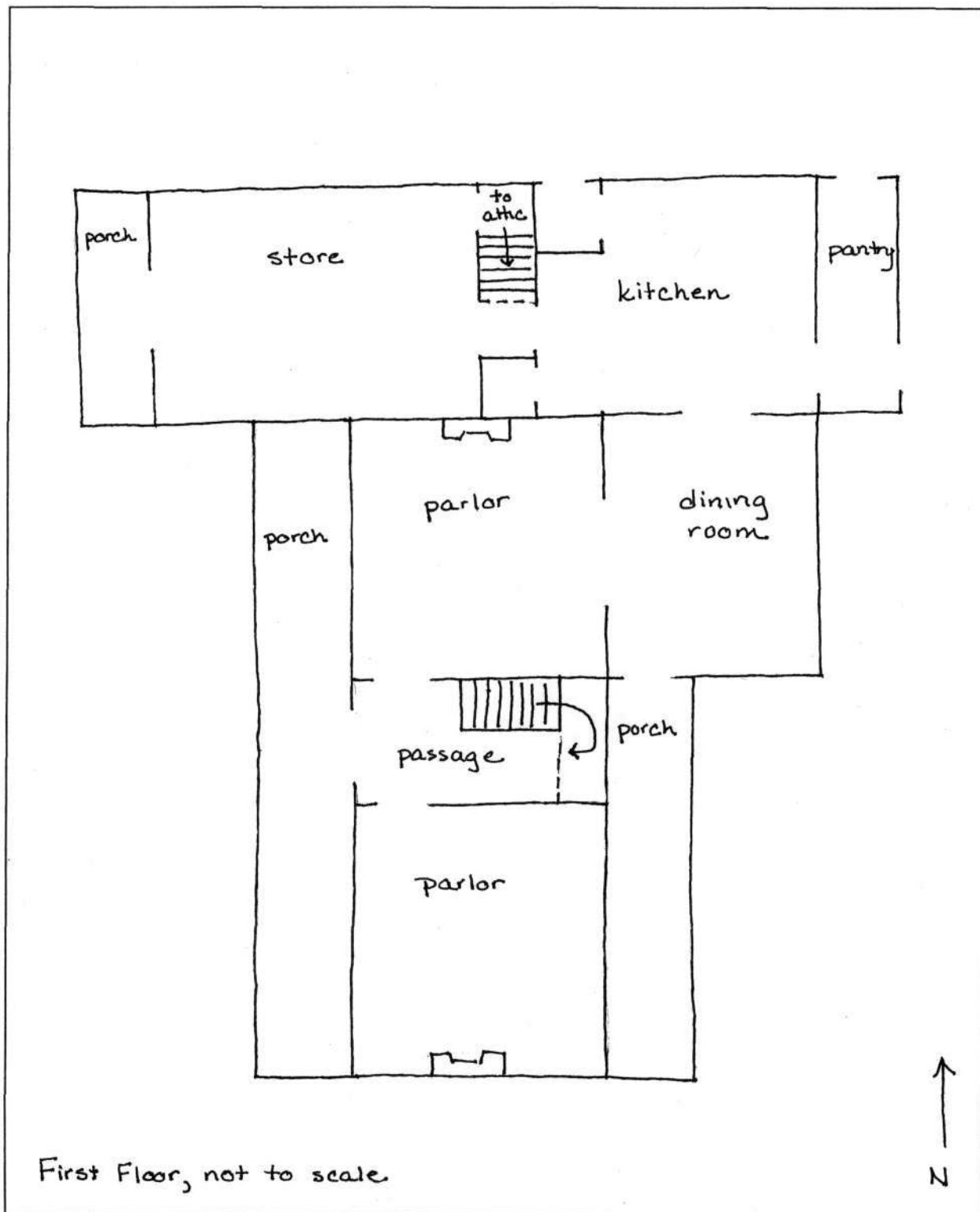


Site Plan

QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Chester Vicinity, Queen Anne's County, Maryland

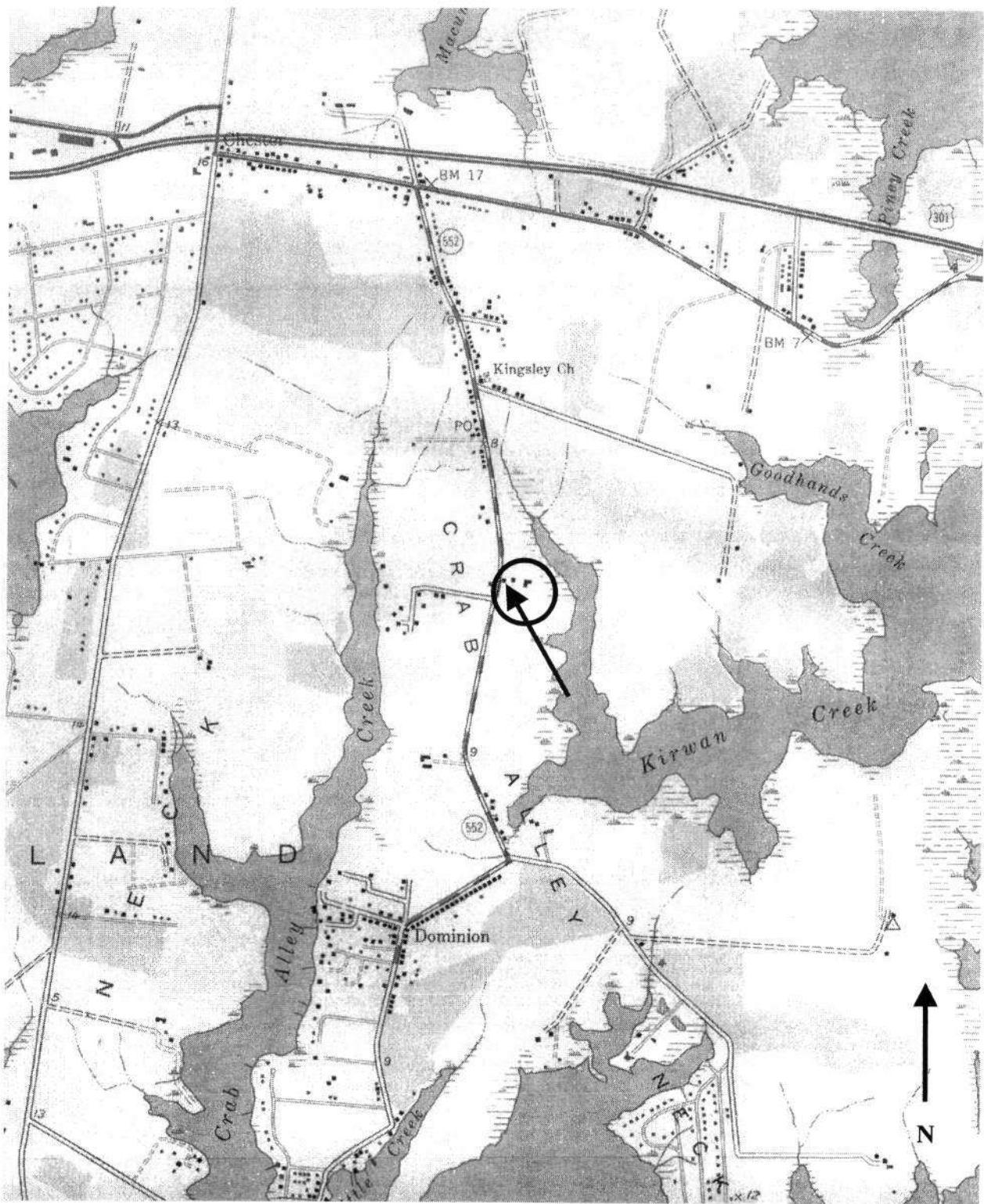


Floor Plan

QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Chester Vicinity, Queen Anne's County, Maryland



QA-550
James E. Kirwan House and Store
Chester Vicinity, Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Kent Island, Maryland Quadrangle (1:24,000)



QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

August 2005

MD SHPO

West (front) and south elevations, view from SW
1 of 11



QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

August 2005

MD SHPO

West (front) elevation, view from west

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QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

August 2005

MD SHPO

North Elevation, view from north.

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QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

August 2005

MD SHPO

East elevation, view from NE

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QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

May 2005

HLR SHPO

Interior of store, View to east from front door,

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1027 11 105 N11111 - 5636



CPA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County House and Store

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

May 2005

MLO SNPO

Interior of house. View to NE within center passage
showing stair and entrance to north parlor.

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0505 - 111111 101 11 820 ()



QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store
Queen Annes County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates
August 2005

MD SHPO

ca. 1889 dairy with ca. 1920s pavilion constructed
over it. View from NW,
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QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store
Queen Anne's County, Maryland
Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

August 2005
MO SHPO

Pump House, view from SW. Shed 2 in
background
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QA-550

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

May 2005

MO SHPO

Shed 1, view from SW

9 of 11



QA-550

James E. Kerwan House and Store
Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Dargie for Betty Bird & Associates
May 2005

MD SHPO

Shed 2, view from SW
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QA-SSO

James E. Kirwan House and Store

Queen Anne's County, Maryland

Julie Darsie for Betty Bird & Associates

May 2005

MD SHPO

Shed 2, view from NE

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